

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-10

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DRAFTED BY EA/K J. FORBES

APPROVED BY EA/K:MR. O'DONOHUE

EA/P M. SMITH (SUBS)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:PFOR, PINT, KS

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS GUIDANCE

1. FOLLOWING GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR APRIL 9 NOON PRESS
BRIEFING QUOTE:

A. HANGING OF EIGHT EMERGENCY MEASURES PRISONERS.

QUESTION: WHAT REACTION DO YOU HAVE TO THE EXECUTION OF
EIGHT EMERGENCY MEASURES PRISONERS IN SEOUL?

ANSWER: WE DEEPLY REGRET THE DRASTIC ACTION OF THE KOREAN
GOVERNMENT IN CARRYING OUT THESE EXECUTIONS.

QUESTION: DID THE USG KNOW IN ADVANCE OF THE KOREAN
GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS?

ANSWER: OF COURSE NOT.

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BACKGROUND: THE EIGHT EXECUTED KOREANS WERE AMONG 22

MEMBERS OF THE OUTLAWED PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IMPRISONED IN 1974 UNDER THE EMERGENCY MEASURES THEN IN EFFECT AND ADDITIONALLY UNDER KOREA'S STRICT ANTI-COMMUNIST LAWS. THEY WERE EXEMPTED FROM THE FEBRUARY 1975 RELEASE OF MOST EMERGENCY MEASURES PRISONERS AND THEIR DEATH SENTENCE WAS UPHELD BY THE KOREAN SUPREME

COURT ON APRIL 8. THE EIGHT WERE EXECUTED BY HANGING ON APRIL 9. THEIR CASE HAS BEEN STRONGLY CHALLENGED BY CRITICS OF THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND HAS AROUSED WIDESPREAD INTEREST AMONG AMERICAN AND FOREIGN RELIGIOUS GROUPS AS WELL AS SOME CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST. WE EXPECT A STRONG REACTION BY CHURCH AND OTHER GROUPS HERE.

B. NEW KOREAN EMERGENCY MEASURE

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE NEW EMERGENCY MEASURE IN KOREA AND THE USE OF ARMY TROOPS TO CLOSE A MAJOR SEOUL UNIVERSITY?

ANSWER: WE HAVE NO COMMENT.

QUESTION: DO YOU AGREE WITH THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT'S EXPLANATION THAT THIS ACTION WAS LINKED TO THE INDOCHINA SITUATION?

ANSWER: THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONCERNED OVER EVENTS IN VIET-NAM AND CAMBODIA. HOWEVER, WE HAVE SEEN NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE KOREAN SECURITY SITUATION IN RECENT WEEKS. WE REGARD THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN KOREA AS AN INTERNAL MATTER.

QUESTION: WAS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMED IN ADVANCE?

ANSWER: WE WERE NEITHER CONSULTED NOR INFORMED IN ADVANCE BY THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT OF THEIR ACTION.

BACKGROUND: ACTING TO STOP SPREADING STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT ON APRIL 8 DECREED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. 7 AND MOVED ARMY TROOPS ONTO THE CAMPUS OF KOREA UNIVERSITY, THE NEW EMERGENCY MEASURE ORDERS THE CLOSING OF KOREA UNIVERSITY AND PROVIDES FOR HARSH (3-7 YEARS) PRISON SENTENCES FOR STUDENT ACTIVISTS. A PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN CITED THE INDOCHINA SITUATION AND THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL SECURITY AND UNITY IN THE FACE OF THE NORTH KOREAN THREAT AS JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NEW MEASURES.

C. U.S. DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO THE ROK

QUESTION: DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON REPORTS FROM SEOUL THAT THE KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVED ASSURANCES OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO KOREA DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON?

ANSWER: WE DON'T DISCUSS THE CONTENTS OF PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS. HOWEVER, AS THE PRESIDENT SAID IN HIS APRIL 3 PRESS CONFERENCE, WE INTEND TO STAND BY OUR ALLIES IN ASIA. THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF THIS. -

BACKGROUND: PRESS REPORTS FROM SEOUL QUOTE KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER KIM DONG-JO AS SAYING HE RECEIVED REASSURANCES OF THE FIRM U.S. DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO THE ROK DURING HIS LATE MARCH VISIT TO WASHINGTON.

2. AT PRESS BRIEFING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN WAS ASKED FOR REACTION TO EXECUTION. HE REPLIED "WE DEEPLY REGRET THE DRASTIC ACTION OF THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT IN CARRYING OUT THESE EXECUTIONS." ASKED IF U.S. EMBASSY WAS CONSULTED ABOUT EMERGENCY MEASURE 7, SPOKESMAN ANSWERED WE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED IN ADVANCE.

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